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03-080-1
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March 30, 2004

US Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman
Department of Agriculture
Docket No. 03-080-2
Regulatory Analysis and Development
PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71
4700 River Road, Unit 118
Riverdale, MD 20730-1238

Dear Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman,

As Montana's largest cattle feeder, I want to comment on the opening of the Canadian border. I understand that the Packers and the meat purveyors are really pushing to open the Canadian border so the supply of cattle will increase and then the prices for live cattle will go down. When you open the border again the market will drop \$8-\$10 per hundred.

Not only does it drop the price but it also makes it hard to even sell cattle. Our window for selling cattle to the Packers is about 30 minutes, one day a week. If we don't sell at their price in that time, we have to wait until the next week because the Packers fill their kill with Canadian Cattle.

I also know that when you opened the border to boxed beef, Excel's and IBP's Canadian plants killed cattle 24 hours a day. They sent all this meat into the U.S. and undersold Swift customers which put Swift into a lost position because they were buying our cattle at a much higher price. Look at the huge profits IBP and Excel are making on the cheaper Canadian cattle. Opening the border benefits only the Canadians, the Packers and meat purveyors. Please consider the lower prices the U.S. producers will receive when you open the border!

Also according to the records the cow that was found in Washington with BSE was a Canadian cow. This is definitely a Canadian problem not a North American problem.

The International Agreement says the border should remain closed for 7 years. If you would keep the border closed then we could start exporting meat again. The Asian countries have told the US that they do not want Canadian Beef.

It is also an unfair playing field with Canada because of their rate of currency exchange compared to the U.S.

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Henry Weschenfelder, President
Weschenfelder Feedlot, Inc.

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